









THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
MFA FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

by

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My paintings are about place and invention. The subject comes from cumulative experiences involving observation and memory of a site or sites that I have visited. The paintings in this exhibition are based on imagery of land and sky, from Alberta and Saskatchewan. My interest is in developing my own vocabulary of colour, surface and gestural mark-making to create an impression or equivalence for my experience of the outdoors. I try to create paintings that are personal at the same time as they are open to interpretation and translation based on one's own experiences. I am exploring ways to create larger scale works with the same feeling of directness and immediacy that is achieved in smaller works painted quickly on location. Just as the natural landscape is in a state of constant change, I paint, edit and revise my work through series of the same or similar compositions. My work evolves through the process of painting with gesture, simplification and even accident. As well, my work is influenced by recalled experiences and therefore affected by the distortion that occurs in memory and imagination.

In my work I am trying to create an equivalence in two dimensional media—such as paint and canvas—for what I observe and feel when in the landscape. It is necessary to maintain a connection with the outdoors and to paint outdoors. My work has been inspired and aided by the small on site studies that are completed outdoors. I have learned that these small works do not easily translate directly as copies into larger works but that they are most useful as reference for their economy, openness and directness. For the same reasons that some other artists' work inspires me, these small works make me want to create my own larger pictures with these same qualities.

Just as my painting is inspired by the painted sketch or impression from the tradition of landscape painting, it is also inspired by abstract painting. My paintings may be painted on unstretched canvas on the floor or wall. I crop or edit my paintings as needed. I work in series to expand upon a particular motif or place. I am searching for a balance between an all-over fusion of visual elements such as colour and light with an amount of compositional solidity and structure. The fusion of gestural elements provides the visual sensation of movement as structural elements relate to an awareness or focus on certain areas such as foreground trees or footing. The suggestion of simplified areas of colour and light are divided by various more solid forms of paths, shadows and branches in ever-changing perspective relate to my personal experience of the boreal landscape. My interest is in the combination of the solid and more enduring features such as the path and tree trunks with the more rapidly changing elements such as the light of day and the colours of particular seasons which are more immediate and temporary.

Process is important in the outcome of the paintings. The process combines the representation of a place with what happens as the place becomes a painting—a place of its own. What occurs in the process of creating a place on canvas is that the work becomes independent of the original place that inspired it. I believe this is necessary for the work to succeed as a painting. It must have it's own qualities as a painting—the elements of colour, surface and gesture that go beyond representation of the physical place. My painting is about the translation of certain observed and remembered aspects of a landscape into the language of painting. I am constantly looking for ways to develop gesture and mark-making into a vocabulary that represent my own subjective and personal view of the landscape in a way that a basic photograph cannot. I value openness and reduction in my paintings in order to allow for individual interpretation and participation on the part of the viewer. I am not interested in over-describing details of a place as I believe that this would limit one's imagination and potential interaction with the picture.



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